

# Summary

## Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the City of Modesto, Stanislaus County, and the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG), is proposing to widen State Route 219 in the city of Modesto and Stanislaus County. The proposed project would upgrade the existing roadway from a two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane conventional highway. In addition, Caltrans would improve intersections and add a median and clear recovery zone. Project costs for the proposed alternatives studied range from \$19,835,000 to \$26,707,000 (as of December 2002). The project is scheduled to begin construction in the summer of 2006.

## Purpose and Need

The volume of traffic and, most notably, the number of trucks traveling the route are higher than the optimum levels recommended for a two-lane conventional highway. The roadway is congested during peak hours and has a high accident rate at intersections where vehicles making left-turns must cross oncoming traffic. The purpose of the project is to provide additional lanes to improve the capacity of the roadway and reduce traffic congestion, improve intersections to improve safety conditions for cross-traffic and left-turning traffic, and to include a median and clear recovery zone to upgrade the roadway to current design standards.

## Proposed Alternatives

The proposed alternatives for this project include a no-build alternative and two build alternatives. Both build alternatives would add an additional lane for each direction of traffic, with improvements. The two build alternatives differ in their proposed median widths and direction of widening. Alternative 1 would widen the roadway to the north and provide acquisition of right-of-way for additional lanes to be added in the future, while Alternative 2 proposes a standard median width, with widening to both sides (north and south) of the existing roadway.

Both build alternatives would include the following improvements:

- Intersections would be brought up to current design standards and the following intersections would be studied to determine if traffic signals are needed: Dale Road, Carver Road, and Tully Road.

- Standard crossing arms at the Tidewater Southern Railroad crossing would not be sufficient for the proposed roadway width. Two crossing arms would be required in the median, in addition to the crossing arms placed in the shoulder.
- Utility poles would have to be relocated to create a six-meter (20-foot) clear recovery zone outside the paved shoulder throughout the project limits.
- Lateral drainage ditches would be constructed throughout the length of the project to direct drainage to four retention basins located near Stoddard Road, Dale Road, Carver Road, and State Route 108 (McHenry Avenue).
- Several access alternatives at the Stanislaus Union Elementary School (see maps of the three access alternatives in Appendix A) are proposed as well.

### ***Alternative 1: Widen North***

This alternative proposes to widen the existing two-lane highway to four lanes from State Route 99 to State Route 108 (McHenry Avenue). The standard lane width would be 3.6-meters (12 feet) with 3.0-meter (10-foot) outside shoulders and a 18.6-meter-wide (61-foot-wide) unpaved median. The proposed centerline of the roadway would be shifted north of the centerline of the existing highway (see Figure 2-3).

### ***Alternative 2: Widen Symmetrically***

This alternative also proposes to widen the existing two-lane highway to four lanes, from State Route 99 to State Route 108 (McHenry Avenue). However, in this alternative, the lane width would be 3.6 meters (12 feet) with 2.4-meter (eight-foot) outside shoulders and a 4.8-meter (16-foot) paved median. The existing centerline of the roadway would be maintained.

### ***No Build Alternative (No Action)***

Existing conditions would continue if the No Build Alternative is selected. The route would remain a two-lane highway with features that do not meet current design standards. There would be no median or clear recovery zone. The level of service would continue to deteriorate and the number of accidents would likely increase as traffic volumes continue to rise. The identified transportation needs for the area would not be met.

## **Impact Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation**

### ***Relocation***

Some residences and businesses would have to be relocated as a result of the construction of this project. Implementation of the Relocation Assistance Program would minimize these effects as required by law.

### **Noise**

Caltrans recommends noise abatement for the residential subdivision at Sisk Road where a soundwall is recommended to replace an existing wall. Impacts from increased noise levels would be mitigated following Federal Highway Administration guidance under Title 23, Part 772 of the Code of Federal Regulations for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise. Noise abatement for the Stanislaus Union Elementary School is being considered with several of the access alternatives to the school.

### **Biology**

As a precautionary measure, pre-construction surveys would be conducted for special-status species, including Swainson's hawks, redtail hawks, burrowing owls, roosting bats and presence of San Joaquin kit fox. These surveys would support the official finding that there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on any special-status species as a result of the construction of this project.

### **Cultural**

The Finding of No Adverse Effect is conditional to the establishment of an Environmentally Sensitive Area during the construction phase of the project at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Church property.